

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: John A. Mendes

John A. Mendes, the youngest of Stanley C. Mendes' and Kathleen DeRego Mendes' five children, was born July 7, 1969 in Honoka'a, Hawai'i. He attended elementary and intermediate school in Pa'auilo and graduated from Honoka'a High School in 1987.

While a student, Mendes worked for Hāmākua Sugar Company during his summer vacations. Upon graduating from high school, he began working full-time for the company as a cane-haul truck driver. He was laid off and forced to seek another livelihood when Hāmākua Sugar Company closed down in 1994. His latest job was as a grounds keeper at Waikoloa Resort.

He and his wife and daughter live in Pa'auilo in the same house where he grew up.

Tape No. 26-11-1-96

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

John A. Mendes (JM)

Pa'auilo, Hawai'i

November 1, 1996

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: Okay, John, let's start. First, can you tell me when and where you were born.

JM: I was born in Honoka'a, July 7, 1969.

WN: Tell me something about your parents [Stanley C. and Kathleen Doris Mendes].

JM: My parents, they're great people, you know. They loving. And I have no complaints about them. When I needed something, they were there to help me. And, you know, I really appreciate that when they were there.

WN: So how many children in your family?

JM: (My parents had five children. I'm the fifth child.) I'm the last of the Mohicans. (Laughs)

WN: And you grew up in this house?

JM: Yeah, I did. I grew up in this house for twenty-seven years.

WN: Okay, and, well, tell me something about this neighborhood. What was it like when you were a kid?

JM: Oh, we had fun with all the other kids, the friends. Go out and, you know, just play around after school. Then come in, do your homework, go to school.

WN: What school you went?

JM: I went to Pa'auilo School. Pa'auilo Intermediate and Elementary [School]. It was good. The school was good. That's where my daughter's going now. And they're improving.

WN: Most of the kids that you hung around with were plantation.

JM: Plantation, yeah.

WN: Plantation kids.

JM: Plantation kids. Well, you know, we used to go to the gym, the park, or to the gulch and swim in the rivers and all that.

WN: Yeah, I was just going to ask you. What did you do to have fun?

JM: Yeah, like I say, we used to go to the gym, or the park. Swim in the gulches and, you know. We didn't cause too much trouble for the neighbors, you know. We wasn't the kind of kids that used to cause too much trouble.

WN: And then you're Portuguese.

JM: Yeah. Yes.

WN: What were the other kids?

JM: Well, Filipinos, Japanese, yeah. Some other Portuguese kids too.

WN: Okay. And what about church?

JM: Oh, church?

WN: Who was at church?

JM: I used to go to church with my brother and his wife, and I used to serve mass as an altar boy. And, you know, that was part of my religion that I used to do.

WN: You had to go every Sunday?

JM: Every Sunday. Right now, I don't have any time (chuckles) to go to church. And you know, I pray at home, and I think of God every time. Not meaning that I don't go to church, I don't think about Him. But He's with me all the time. Yeah.

WN: Well, your father---do you consider your parents, were they pretty strict with you?

JM: Not really. Well, sometimes they were strict. But most of the time, I didn't cause too much trouble for they can get (laughs) angry with me, you know. And that's why they was good. They wasn't too strict about stuffs.

WN: So your father worked, and your mother, was she . . .

JM: She stayed home.

WN: . . . stayed home.

JM: She stayed home, taking care of my disabled sister.

WN: What about organized stuff? Sports and things. Did you have that?

JM: I played tee-ball, when I was younger. The other sports, like basketball or football, I wasn't

too interested in doing. I was more like staying at home, doing yard work, or I used to go out with my neighbor up in the corner here—I call him Uncle Harry, we all call him Uncle Harry—I used to go hang around with him when I was in, you know, my younger times. We used to go Kona with his family and go to Hilo sometimes—he's elderly. We used to pick up aluminum cans on the road. I used to hang around, you know, stay with him. I learned pretty much things like doing mechanic work or something, he used to do mechanic work, so I used to help him out.

WN: He worked for the plantation?

JM: He was a mechanic, tire boy, at the plantation, and he retired. Yeah.

WN: But when you were growing up, did the plantation have anything for the community? Do you remember?

JM: Oh, not really. Not like sports, not games for the kids and that kind of stuff. They didn't have that kind of things for us.

WN: I guess in your father's time, the plantation was more active in the community.

JM: Yeah, I guess everybody else was active, doing things. Like when I was growing up, there wasn't too much, besides the basketball gym up here. You know, you could go up there and play. But I didn't feel like going up there.

WN: What about chores? You guys had chores?

JM: Oh, chores. I clean the yard, dump the trash, empty trash, and once in a while, wash the dishes for my mom. That's the main (laughs) I guess the main parts of my chores that I had.

WN: And then after elementary school, Pa'auilo School, where did you go to school?

JM: I went to Honoka'a High [& Intermediate] School, and I graduated in '87 from there.

WN: When you were going school, did you ever think about what you wanted to be or wanted to do when you finished school?

JM: I wanted to go into college and pursue one career like as an auto-body worker or a mechanic or diesel mechanic worker or something. But at that time, times was hard because it was getting too expensive to be going to college and everything. And I just forgot about it. I forgot about doing that, and I just picked up the career of working on the plantation [i.e., Hāmākua Sugar Co.]. And ever since then, for eight years, I worked on the plantation.

WN: You told me that during school, you worked in the summers, eh?

JM: Yeah.

WN: What kind stuff you did?

JM: Well, I used to work for the plantation as a knapsack sprayer.

WN: Oh, knapsack sprayer.

JM: Yeah, I used to spray herbicide in the fields. And one year, I went and cover seed. You know, follow the tractor and cover the seed [with dirt] that wasn't covered good enough.

WN: And how you did that, by hand?

JM: With a hoe and . . .

WN: Oh, with a hoe.

JM: With a hoe, just cover it up. Then from there I went back to spraying herbicide.

WN: Which job you liked better?

JM: I think I liked the herbicide spraying better, because (chuckles) wasn't too stressful. (WN laughs.) Covering seed, supervisors hounding—I mean, you know, not hounding you, but they're actually watching you all the time. Like while you're spraying herbicide, you're in the fields and they're not around. You're just doing, keeping yourself busy.

WN: Do you spray 'em on the weeds?

JM: Spray the weeds, knock 'em down, stamp 'em down with your feet and just spray the weeds, just soak 'em with the herbicide.

WN: And how often you had to do one field? I mean, how often you had to go back?

JM: We used to just keep on going field after next field. Then, I guess after we complete that cycle of the fields that needed to be, then we will come back to start another area of fields. So wasn't too many times. After the men come in with their knapsacks, then the tractors come in, the herbicide tractors come in. And they catch the ones that we didn't catch as good.

WN: Oh, so you did 'em by hand.

JM: We did it by hand. I did it by hand. As far as spraying with herbicide on the machine, I didn't do that.

WN: So this knapsack sprayer is the kind of job that they gave usually to the . . .

JM: The school kids, the school kids. Knapsack spraying or covering seed with the tractor. Irrigation helpers. Jobs like that.

WN: How much did you get paid?

JM: At that time was the minimum, I guess \$5.75 or something. That was the minimum at that time.

WN: And you work eight hours a day?

- JM: Eight hours a day. Sometime we work ten, but not all the time.
- WN: You get overtime for that?
- JM: Overtime for that, yeah.
- WN: Let's see. What grade were you when you first started?
- JM: Tenth grade.
- WN: Tenth grade.
- JM: I reached the tenth grade year. Or actually, I was in my ninth grade year when I started. Then year after year.
- WN: How were your bosses?
- JM: They were pretty good. They were good. I get along with pretty much everybody. I have no complaints about the bosses that we had.
- WN: How long did it take you to learn how to do some of these jobs?
- JM: Oh, not too long. It's just came naturally, you know, what kind of weeds you have to spray and what kind of weeds that the herbicide can kill.
- WN: Did they have a mask?
- JM: No, I didn't use mask. They issued out a mask, but the kind of herbicide we was using, we didn't need to be using the masks.
- WN: The smell didn't bother you?
- JM: The smell didn't bother. For some people, I guess, some of the kids, they used the mask. But for me, it didn't bother me.
- WN: So when you were a freshman, ninth grade, were there younger kids than you out there?
- JM: No, that's the youngest that were out there.
- WN: You were part of a gang or anything?
- JM: Yeah, a herbicide gang. That's all.
- WN: They're all kids your age.
- JM: No, they were mixing us. At one time, they were mixing us with the regular herbicide workers and the kid gang.
- WN: Okay, and then, so you graduated 1987. Okay, well then what happened?

JM: Then I stayed there, I stayed at the spray and herbicide for about a year or so. Then I applied out for different jobs. And one of them was a truck driver, you know, haul cane. And my dad didn't want, (laughs) he didn't want me to go and haul cane and drive truck, because he say is very, is dangerous, you know. And I got the job. And when I came home and I told him, "Hey, Daddy, I got the truck driving job. I gotta go and start driving truck," you know, he was happy. He was happy about it. And until this day, I feel that he's happy that I got to learn how to drive a truck.

Because, we was in younger days in school, teachers used to ask us, "Oh, what do you want to be when you grow up?"

I told the teacher, "I want to be truck driver."

Teacher say, "Why?"

So I say, you know, I guess I just have a interest in driving a truck. Because I used to go out with my dad, he used to pick me up and go to Hilo, pick up the equipment, 'cause he used to drive a loader, the low bed for the company. And go to Hilo, come back. And it was something great to me that I was doing that. So that's what I wanted to do, I guess.

WN: But at first he didn't want you, because he thought it was dangerous.

JM: Yeah, he didn't want me to drive because he thought it was too dangerous for me. And I was only seventeen, eighteen at that time. And in fact, I was one of the youngest, I was **the** youngest driver driving for the plantation at eighteen. The company took the risk where if anything do happen, you know, accidents or something, that they would take the responsibility, that they hired me for driving the trucks. And till the time, from [age] eighteen [1987] till the last day of the final harvest [1994], no major accidents. You know, I didn't have any accidents, I didn't turn over trucks or anything. So I consider that as I have a good luck time, you know.

WN: Yeah, 'cause I remember your father telling me there were some accidents . . .

JM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: . . . he remembers. Overturned trucks and things.

JM: Yeah. I have a little book with so many pictures in there. You wouldn't believe the drivers came out alive in there.

WN: Did you take a test before? And did that get you the job?

JM: No, I didn't take no test. Well, I applied for the job, then about two weeks or three weeks later, they gave me the paper saying that you got the job. And the day after, I had to go and [take a] pretraining class, like paperwork, kind of like knowledge about the truck, the equipment, you know, how it runs. Then from there, I went to the training class. It took me about a month. It took us about a month. There was me and I think four other guys, or six other guys. And we all went as a group and just trained. And from there, I got my license. At that time, was Type 6 license. From there, I just started driving for eight and a half years for

the company.

WN: Did you feel you had an advantage because your father was a driver? In terms of learning?

JM: I think so. I used to watch him, the way he drive, and I think my advantage there.

WN: This one is double clutch?

JM: Yeah, double clutch. I guess my advantage came from that, you know. Watching him, the way he used to go and drive. Yeah.

WN: So you were herbicide sprayer for one year full-time after high school.

JM: Yeah.

WN: Then you switched over to cane truck driver one year later.

JM: Yeah.

(Taping stops, then resumes)

WN: So that was your job, then, for the rest of the time you were working for Hāmākua Sugar [Company]?

JM: Yeah, yeah. Then, well, I used to go and TT [temporary takeover] to the mill yard and drive the cane stacker. I used to stack the cane and feed the cane to the mill, the trucks coming. I TTed at that job for about two months.

WN: What is TT?

JM: TT is temporary takeover or something. For about two months, then I went back on my truck, because somebody else apply for the [cane stacker] job, the regular job. And they got it. So I went back on my regular job. So I was TTed here and there in the company. Different other jobs like I used to haul rods to the welding shop, or all that kind of stuffs, you know. All this, yeah.

WN: Down at Haina?

JM: Yeah, at the Haina mill. This was at the Haina mill. Then when the company, when they shut down for off-season times, I used to go and haul gravel for the road construction or . . .

WN: You were still being paid by the plantation, yeah?

JM: Yeah. Yeah, off-season time was when they shut down the mill, do some repairing, do the repairs of the mill, and while we're not hauling cane, they find jobs for the workers, and we go to all different other parts of the plantation. Some of those guys who used to go to the mill help the welders weld and get ready. Like me, I used to go to the road gang, the construction gang, and help them haul gravel or pave the roads, drive the roller machines, you know. I

learned to drive all the equipment of that type, on that kind of times when the mill was shut down for, not renovations, but improvement or something.

WN: How often did they shut down?

JM: Once a year. Once a year, they used to shut down the mill and do the repairs, the major repairs and some minor repairs. And that was kind of like a good part of the times, where you go out and do different jobs. Not all the time---you're not doing the same job over and over. Where you go out, you learn this, you learn that. You learn how to do this one, how to do that other job, you know. That's where I got my experience doing other kind of jobs. Driving equipment, other kind equipment, tractors and so forth.

WN: And that's all on-the-job kind training?

JM: Yeah, the supervisors come out and they say, "Oh, I'll show you how." And you just learn it yourself. It was good. On-the-job training. I used to like doing that.

WN: When you first started, was the 'O'ōkala mill still going?

JM: No, they shut down right before I started to work, to haul cane, in fact. [The 'O'ōkala mill closed in 1987.] While I was working, the mill was running at that time. But as far as hauling cane to the mill, no. I didn't haul cane to that mill. Was all to Haina.

When I was younger, we used to go to my auntie's house in 'O'ōkala, and they used to live right above the mill, and we used to just watch the mill run, you know. The 'O'ōkala mill. I used to like that. And that's where I used to see the trucks going back in, coming in and out, in and out, to the yard. And it used to interest me there, too, you know, watching those things go.

WN: That's how you got your interest . . .

JM: Yeah.

WN: . . . in driving truck. While you were working, do you remember people getting laid off?

JM: Yeah. The times we was getting laid off, lot of people was scared. They was thinking they going get laid off, which ones, who's going to get laid off. I seen lot of people got—they got it, you know. They got laid off, and they wasn't too happy about it.

WN: This is before the closing.

JM: Yeah, before the closing.

WN: So how did they determine who got laid off?

JM: I guess they were determining the last seniority people versus the old-timers. And the jobs that they really didn't need going on, they eliminated those jobs. And the people in those jobs, they got a chance to either go and take the severance [pay], or gone and bump off somebody else. Take somebody else's job. And some they did that, they took somebody else's

job. And some, they just took the layoff. Like my brother was one of them. He was bumped off of his job. So he could have go and take somebody else's, but he didn't. He just took the layoff, you know. He took the layoff because the other person that bumped him off his job, that other guy was eliminated. His job was eliminated. So, you know, I seen lot of changes going on. I was really worried. I thought I was going to be knocked off. I seen lot of the old-timer guys, they got their jobs eliminated and bumped off and, you know, they didn't go and come back and bump somebody else off.

WN: Must be hard, eh? To bump somebody.

JM: Yeah, yeah, you know. Especially, you know everybody, everybody knows each other. Kind of hard to go there and, "Eh, I'm going to take your job." If was, like, my opinion, I wouldn't go and do that to somebody else be. I would just take it as it is, have to go and find another job.

WN: So that's what happened to your brother? He didn't want to bump somebody?

JM: He didn't want to bump somebody off. So he just played it cool, take it easy, you know.

WN: When did he get laid off?

JM: Oh, the first layoff was I think 1992. First laid-off times, I think was back in that time. Yeah. And he struggled, going from job to job. Right now, he has a good job. He works for the state. He's happy, yeah.

WN: Must have been hard for the old-timers, too, to bump somebody off.

JM: Yeah, yeah. The older-timers, you know, I guess some of them, they didn't really care because some of them—like I said, some of them was the ages of almost retirement kind of age. And so they didn't really care because they had the age of retirement already. But, you know, the younger ones, that's the ones that had the hard time.

WN: So you were able to hang on to your job until they announced the . . .

JM: The closing, yeah.

WN: How did you first hear of the closing?

JM: Well, they called the meeting saying for all the workers to come in, we have a very important meeting. They going to have to discuss it with the workers. And the meeting was about the closing of the company. And at that time, when they announced that, they was going to start eliminating sections of crews of the plantation. Like the planting crew, they eliminated that. They stopped planting cane, and they stopped herbiciding cane, all that kind of stuffs. And the irrigation---well, the irrigation, they had drip irrigation, so it wasn't too worried about that. Mostly was like the planting of the cane, they stopped planting of the cane, and herbicide, fertilizing of the cane. All that, they stopped all those jobs, yeah? And they had an opportunity where, if those people want to come, they come in to the harvesting department. Because the harvesting department was going to have to harvest the cane out until the end, until the last of the closure.

- WN: And you were harvesting, yeah? Mostly, 'cause you were cane truck, haul truck.
- JM: Yeah, yeah. I was on the harvesting crew, so I wasn't. . . . Well, like I say, I was kind of scared, because I thought they was going to lay off the younger workers, the younger-timers. Was going to knock them off and the old-timers from the outside, the outsiders [from other plantations], they was going to come in and take our places. But they didn't. They kept the way we were, that's the way we ended [with] the company. But some of 'em came from the outside. They came and haul for the last harvest—they drove trucks for the last harvest, for the last year.
- WN: When they called you for the meeting, did you have an idea what it was about?
- JM: Well, not really. Everybody was talking about the closure, it's going to happen, something's going to happen. Then, when they announced that they filed Chapter 11, you know, then we knew already that we was going to be out of jobs, we wasn't going to be working [for the sugar company] for the rest of our lives. My thought was, eh, I'm going to work for plantation, you know. At least I might get chance to retire from the plantation, you know. But it didn't happen. You know, it didn't happen that way.
- WN: So you thought maybe there's a possibility that you would get laid off sometime or another.
- JM: Yeah.
- WN: Well, what about the possibility of the entire plantation just closing down. Did you ever think that was going to happen?
- JM: No, never did. Like I said, I never thought that the plantation was going to close just completely like the way it did, you know. Never thought. I thought maybe my generation could work for the plantation, but no.
- WN: When did it hit you that this is it?
- JM: Oh, the last few weeks, the last week or so, it hit me real bad that, you know, I'm going to be out of a job. What I'm going to do? I mean, how I'm going to support my family? From my standpoint, I didn't care too much. But my family, that's the one that I care about mostly. How I'm going to support them, yeah? How's my support for the family?
- WN: Your father was telling me that he didn't believe that they were actually going to shut down and there was going to be no more sugar in this area until the last day of the final harvest. That's when he said, you know, it's really happening. But up until that day, he always believed that, somehow, it's going to continue.
- JM: Yeah, I had that feeling that---till the day that it was going to close, I thought maybe somebody would come in and say, "Yeah, I'm going to save these people here. I'm going to save these people. I'm going to have them work. Give them jobs." But I guess no one didn't want to go out and, I guess, put their lives in jeopardy too, you know. Go out and make it where the company---this not going to happen, it's not going to go.
- WN: What thoughts went through your mind on the last day? You participated in the final harvest

[celebration on September 31, 1994]?

JM: Yeah, I got pictures of the haul up there. I really don't know. My mind wasn't---I guess, I don't know what I was feeling that day. It felt like a regular, normal working day to me. Going in, just jumping in my truck, and start a day, an eight-hour day. And the last day was kind of touching, when we seen everything going out, going down, the last of the mill and everything. That was kind of sad.

WN: So you drove the cane truck through town?

JM: Through town. Yeah, I drove my truck through town, yeah. That was the last time I've been in that, in the truck.

WN: You had a wife, and you had a daughter about three, right? Well, she's five now.

JM: She's five right now, yeah.

WN: She was really young then.

JM: Yeah. Even she remembers what was going on. Because sometime when I go down to the Haina camp and go visit some of my friends down there, she say, "Oh we going go to Daddy's working place." But I have to say that I don't work there no more. There's no job down there no more. She was with me—my wife and my daughter was with me—the night of the last harvest. I brought them with me. I let them ride with me in the truck, you know. And they was really surprised about it. They was happy about it. I guess they had to have the feeling that I was going through—you know, seeing all the other trucks, all the other workers, yeah.

WN: So while you were going through this time of, you know, trying to evaluate what happened and, you know, the realization that you're not going to be working for the company anymore, where did you turn to for help at all? Or support?

JM: My wife, my family, you know. They supported me. They was there when I wasn't feeling too good, you know. They were there. They say, you know, things going happen, things going come out.

WN: Was your wife working at the time?

JM: Yeah, she was working (as *kumu* or Hawaiiana teacher at Pa'auilo School). Yeah. Then she was working at the Hapuna Beach Prince [Hotel]. She worked down the hotels, at least to get some income coming in (and just so that we could get medical benefits).

WN: When the time came to have to look for another job, what was available at that time?

JM: Oh, there wasn't hardly any jobs available. I went to work for this company in Hilo. (I was laid off before I could reach my probationary period. The boss said that I was "monkeying around." And I know I wasn't because I've always taken my job seriously. My wife said it could be that I had a bad attitude because deep down inside I was grieving about my job loss at Hāmākua Sugar. Now, I don't let my attitude about the plantation bother me. I can accept

now that it's over, *pau*, and life goes on. It took a while to admit that.)

WN: So how do you compare what you are doing now for the hotel [as a landscaper] with sugar work? Which one do you like better?

JM: Oh, for one, working in the sugar company---well, for me, I don't mind getting dirty. I don't mind getting dirty. And for the hotel, you don't get dirty. You stay clean all day, you know. So that's the difference between working for the plantation and the hotel.

WN: And this hotel is Kona side?

JM: Yeah, down in Kona. Down in Waikoloa, actually. And I drive every morning down there.

WN: How long does it take you to get there?

JM: It takes me about an hour. Yeah, about an hour or so. Half an hour if there's no traffic.

WN: So how does working way an hour away, compared to working right here, how does that affect you and your family life?

JM: Different. You don't see your family that often, you know. You come home, and no sooner you get home, it's dark. Then the next thing you know, it's bedtime, and waking up, go to work again, you know. Hardly any chance to see your family. While working closer, you get done at work at a certain time, you home, you get chance to spend time with your family, you get to go somewhere, you not worried about getting home late.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: What about this neighborhood? I know that, you know, when you folks are all working together or when you grew up together and you know everybody. What about now that everybody's working different places? Does that affect your relations with your neighbors or anything like that?

JM: Oh, my neighbor and I, when we was working on the plantation—we're still buddies, we're still friends, but not like the way we were when we were working for the plantation. I hardly see him, he don't see me. And if we got to talk together, it's just maybe a brief while. Not for a long time. So it kind of draws it out, draws it out from your friends. Takes it away from your friends, that you don't work for the plantation no more. Although you see everybody every day, every day you see the same people, but it's just different. You know, you don't get to talk to them always.

WN: What about your co-workers down at the hotel. They come from different areas.

JM: Yeah, they come from different areas. Some of the co-workers that I working with right now, they're from the plantation too. So we get along pretty good. We get along good together,

'cause we know each other, yeah. And the other people that they're there, outsiders, I get along with everybody—they like us, we like them. I tell them, you know, just don't give me pity because I was a worker for the sugar company. I'm just another ordinary person who's looking for jobs. Don't give me pity because of that. You know, they understand. They understand that.

WN: Do you feel that people give you pity?

JM: Some, yeah, yeah. You know, you talking to them, and they say, "Oh, where you came from? What do you do?"

I said, "Oh, I used to work for the plantation." Oh, you can see they kind of look at you, they kind of feel bad for you.

WN: Yeah, like you down and out or something.

JM: Yeah. But I tell them don't feel pity for me, 'cause I'm just a normal person. Gotta take it like it is, you know? I was approached a couple times, these persons see I wear my Hāmākua shirt, my t-shirt. And he say, "Oh, you used to work for the plantation?"

I say, "Yeah."

"Oh," you know, this, that, "How would you like to work for me for this?"

I said, "No, thank you. I have a current job right now." So, they thinking that we still looking, you know, people still looking for jobs, you know. There's a lot of workers up there, plantation workers. They still looking for jobs, still don't have jobs.

WN: Did you have to go on welfare at all?

JM: Ah, no.

WN: Food stamps?

JM: Um, food stamps, no. No. We didn't go. We didn't get on that.

WN: Is the pay that you're making now about the same? Or . . .

JM: More. It's more pay. So, you know.

WN: And, I think you told me a little bit about this before, but how does your wife feel about your commute? Your not spending as much time [at home]?

JM: Yeah, she feels out of place, lonely, you know. I come home, she says she miss me. You know, I say I miss them too, for that long of time. I leave my house at five o'clock in the morning, and I don't get home till five o'clock in the afternoon. So that long period of time, they don't see me, and I don't see them. It's kind of lonely without that.

WN: What about your daughter?

JM: She really---she misses me a lot. Because I go to work, and I come home. Sometime when I come home, she might be sleeping at the time already. So I don't get to see her that often.

WN: So it really has affected, yeah? Your family.

JM: Yeah, pretty much.

WN: Having to commute like that.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: So would you say that the commute is the most difficult thing that your family is having to deal with as a result of the plantation closing?

JM: Oh, I think they're getting adjusted to it. They're adjusting themselves where I not home, they're doing their own activities or something. And when I get home, they're home. They waiting for me. And I guess, like I say, they're adjusting themselves to where, when I'm not home, they're doing their own activities, and when I come home, then I will stay with them, take time with them.

WN: What about your parents? Do you rely on them for any kind of help, baby-sitting and things like that?

JM: No, no. My mother-in-law, we take---my girl [daughter], she likes to go to her. And we don't really rely on her for baby-sitting. The majority of the places where we go, she goes with us, you know. She goes with us, and, but some of the times she don't want to go, so she stays with the grandma.

Like financial needs and all that, I don't involve my parents for that. Because, like I say, my parents, they raised me from day one to eighteen years old. And I can take care myself from eighteen years old till my time, you know. I don't want to involve my parents in my financial needs and all that kind of stuff. I'm able to take care of myself. No matter which way, how I'm going to do it, but I'll do it. I'll find a way to keep my family financial fit, you know.

WN: How do you feel the closing of the plantation and people working other places is affecting the community in general? Like people were saying, well, you know, now it seems like there's more crime now or more drugs, and things like that. Do you see some of that?

JM: I don't know. I don't know. I think the crime and the drugs and everything is just the same routine of every day. Not like while the plantation is going on, and now the plantation is shut down. I see the same things going on. I see the same things going on. I hear most of the things going on at that time and now, it's all the same. Some, the people, they fight with one another and all that kind stuff, it's because, I guess because of the stress from what happened to the company. You know, the people fight, neighbors fight among neighbors or, you know, stuffs like that happen. I guess some people, they just can't handle the stress, you know.

WN: Do you see differences in the community now, as compared to when you were growing up?

JM: Yeah. I mean, the kids, the younger kids, while we were growing up, we wasn't as wild. We

wasn't wild like the kids now. They pass on the road, they yelling, they swearing, you know. My time when I was growing up, didn't hear that kind of stuffs around that often. The kids nowadays, they much wilder. Sometimes I sit back and I think, "Chee, I wonder if I was that bad." (WN chuckles.) I don't think I was that bad when I was in school. Even the schools, when I was in school ten years ago, it's not as—ten years ago, I cannot compare to now. The kids are in gangs, fighting in school, the girls pregnant, and all that kind of stuff. Well, you know, we had people like that, but not as bad as now. You hear 'em all over, all the schools, all over. Crime here, crime there. Some of the kids, you read the newspaper, and you hear kids going to the schools, stealing FFA [Future Farmers of America] animals and all that kind of stuff. I don't know, they steal animals.

WN: Sheesh.

JM: The kids doing that, yeah? Kids. Comparing to my time, if we used to do that, we would get a lot of trouble. Now kids, they just let it go. Although in school, I wasn't a really angel in school. I used to go out with the other guys, with the friends. But if I have to be in class, the classes that I have to be, I have to be. But those classes that I don't need to be, (WN laughs) I'm not there. I'm not there.

Sometime I think back, you know, if I didn't do what I was doing back then, maybe my future would be better. Maybe I would have my own business or something. But I guess that younger time, kids going be kids, eh? (WN chuckles.) Yeah.

WN: So there's not going to be any more sugar in this area. So what do you think is the---what would you like to see for the future of Pa'auilo and [the] Hāmākua Coast?

JM: For my opinion, no sugar going to be added. I think there might be a possibility on eucalyptus trees growing. Because they were having a company come from the Mainland, thinking about buying eucalyptus and all the types of trees, the short-grow trees that they can sell and provide some jobs for the people over here.

WN: Eucalyptus for what? For lumber?

JM: For lumber and I guess paper. Yeah. They were going to have some forest lands around, some acres—I don't know if in this Pa'auilo area, Hāmākua area. We don't know what area. So that might be a possibility on that. There's a family where they're thinking about doing that. I went to these classes, to these forestry classes, and we learned about how to propagate those trees, the seedlings and everything. And you can, if we wanted to grow them, start our own company, our own business, and contract the trees out to this company coming out from the Mainland. And I think that is one of the best ideas of work for the people over here. 'Cause they kind of used to already working in this type of atmosphere, and the ground area. They kind of used to working for those types of areas.

WN: Is that something you would want to go into?

JM: Eventually, yeah. I might be able, I might contract trees to this company that's supposedly growing.

WN: So you would want to see this area stay in agriculture or forestry.

JM: Well, if other businesses have to come up for jobs, that's what it's going to have to be. Let's say they going to build a hotel up here, I can't say no, because that's jobs for people. That's jobs for people. Or, you know, hotels coming up here and there. That would be jobs for the people on this side of the island, yeah? Majority of the jobs is on the west side and the south side right now. So.

WN: You feel you want to keep living on this side?

JM: I would like to move to the west side. But if I have to, I'll stay here. You know, as long as possible, I would like to stay here. And if the opportunity gets smaller then I might just move to the Mainland or something. Move to the Mainland and start out a new career there.

WN: When we think of sugar, what does it mean to you? What do you want your children to know about sugar? What to remember?

JM: I want them to remember that the parents, grandparents were part of that company, the [Hāmākua] Sugar Company. The parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, you know, down the line, the older generation. I want them to think about the older generation, what they gone through for make you possible, as a young generation coming up, eh? That the sugar provided your—you know, it made you a family too.

WN: Do you have any bitterness towards anything or anybody about what's happened?

JM: No, I don't think so. There's no bitterness about it. If had to happen, it happened. Couldn't do nothing much about it. Couldn't do much about what was going on. There was the people that came in and tried their best. I give them my acknowledge, acknowledge them that they did their best. They tried their best to save the company.

But I kind of blame the workers, though, in one part. I kind of blame the workers that they didn't try as much to save the company. They go out, they break the equipment, that is what was causing the company for lose the money, you know. For me, I was a worker, I cannot think about—the equipment that I used to run—I cannot think that I did any damage to it to cause the company to close. There's a lot of people where I seen them break something. The next day, they break another thing. They just keep on breaking something down the line and causing the company more money on top of that. I'm not considered as a great worker. I tried my best not to break any equipment. It happened, but not to cause the company the amount of money as other people was doing.

Maybe that's my bitterness about the closing of the company, that the workers, they didn't take care of what they supposed to. Maybe the management wasn't stiff enough to get down on those people that used to tear up the equipment, you know. Truck's overturned, the driver comes back tomorrow. He burns an engine, the driver comes back tomorrow. And that's how it was.

Many workers—the license that we was carrying was a CDL license, it's a certified driver's license. And it comes from the state. The state certifies that license for you. And in order for get that license, you have to be clean. Clean of alcohol, drugs, substance, and all that. As owner of a company, you have to crack down on those kind of stuffs. But the only time they were cracking down on those kind of stuffs was when you have to go and have your physical.

Go and have a physical, if you were caught with any substance in you, they suspend you. That's the only way that they was controlling that. But if somebody goes and wreck this truck against the hill, against the bank, turn it over or something, they let the guy go home, ease out his pain, come back work tomorrow. And if the guy was intoxicated or read drugs in him, he wasn't—that's not a professional. He's not a professional to be doing that. They considered a CDL driver as a professional, or any other person as a professional in their jobs. But the company, the management wasn't cracking down on that stuffs, though. I could . . .

WN: What about the union [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union]? Did the union give them any kind protection?

JM: The union says, "Oh, okay, let him go. Let him clean himself out for about a week or so. Try him again." Something happen to him the following week or down the line, the union says, "Oh, let him go again. Let him clean out for himself." I seen people come to the plantation. They come in, they wreck the equipment, they leave 'em there. You know, they hold 'em in. Keep on, just constantly wrecking the equipment, burning engines or turning over the trucks, or burning drive lines, transfer cases, transmission, they do that. And they still keep those kind of people. And then some of them do that, and they don't really mean it, they just say, "Eh, thank you for working for me. I don't want you guys come back." They fire 'em. And the guy was a good driver, good worker. The good ones, they let go. The bad ones, they keep. I used to see that in the plantation too.

Back then, back in the old times, I don't remember that kind of stuffs happening. My dad didn't come home and say, "Oh, this guy wreck this truck here, and they keep 'em. And he was drunk." I didn't remember him coming home and saying this kind of stuffs. Only I used to come home and tell him, "Oh, you know? This guy did that. His truck banged up." He used to be amazed about that. Used to be amazed. I could say that he's proud of me, that nothing like that happened. He's proud of me, and he's proud of my brother, that nothing like that happened, you know. We were together, you know. He's proud of the two of us. I give my parents a lot of respect, you know. I give them respect. Although I don't see them often, or I get angry with them, I still respect them a lot. Yeah.

WN: Okay, well, I think we're just about finished. Is there anything more you want to say, before I turn off the tape recorder?

JM: No, no, I don't think so. (WN laughs.)

WN: Okay, well, thanks a lot.

JM: Thank you.

WN: Appreciate it.

JM: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

THE CLOSING OF SUGAR PLANTATIONS:

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